

Mindfulness Exercise: Three Minute Breathing Space

This exercise is designed to help us *identify less* with our thoughts, directly experience whatever is happening to us right now in mind and body, and to face whatever is difficult. Remember, the goal of this exercise is not to *take away* negative feelings, but rather to increase our capacity to tolerate them. Three Minute Breathing Space can be used as a “time out” from difficult situations. This exercise gives us a brief opportunity to take refuge in the present moment.

Awareness

Sit upright in a comfortable position and close your eyes. Start by bringing your awareness to your inner experience. Ask yourself, “*What is my experience right now?*”

What *thoughts* are going through my mind? Notice them as passing mental events.

What *feelings* are here? Turn your attention *towards* any emotional discomfort or unpleasant feelings.

What *body sensations* are present? Scan the body quickly and notice any tightness or bracing.

Don't try to avoid negative feelings. Simply be present with whatever is here.

Gathering

Next gently bring your attention to your breath. Follow the breath all the way in and all the way out. Notice the sensations and movement in your belly. Use your breath to anchor yourself to the present.

Expanding

Now expand your awareness beyond your breath to take in a sense of your body as a whole. If you sense tension or discomfort, breath into it as you allow your body to soften and open. On the out-breath, you can say, “It's okay...whatever it is, it's already here. Let me feel it.” As best you can, bring this accepting awareness into the rest of your day.